

Taxonomy of controversial Ayurvedic plant drugs



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At present more than 7500 species of flowering plants are used for their medicinal properties in India. Most of them are known by their local names. The multitude of local names, imperfect botanical knowledge as well as the intentional adulteration in the raw material available in the Indian market has led to controversy in respect of the identity of genuine plant drugs. Obviously, this has resulted into impure and ineffective Ayurvedic medicines. Although there is a great demand for these medicines, the pharmaceutical companies are not in a position to supply good quality material - mainly due to the adulterated raw material. Identification of raw material available in the market is difficult as it is supplied in the form of either powder or extract. This adulteration and ambiguity of raw material must be carefully dealt with. Identification of whole plant material as well as the market samples is an urgent need of the day. In fact, it is a challenge to the students of plant taxonomy. The future investigations in plant taxonomy should be concentrated in removing controversy about medicinal plants and standardize the quality of market samples. Methods such as botanical identification, chemical analysis, therapeutic trials etc. may help in this respect.

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